A Comparative Approach to Art Education Policy Research

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The challenges and opportunities of globalization require art education scholars and practitioners to develop international competencies, but research in the specific field of comparative art education is very limited at present. In this article, I provide a pragmatic framework for studying art education policy as a subfield of comparative cultural policy. Based on a review of literature in comparative cultural policy, I discuss how research in the field has evolved over the past 35 years along three main trajectories, which I call comparative international, cross-national, and transnational. I present major conceptual models used in comparative cultural policy, and conclude with general recommendations for art education policy scholars interested in pursuing international research.

In the context of globalization, art education researchers and practitioners increasingly encounter international topics, ideas, colleagues, and practices. Actively engaging in the international context requires an understanding of how diverse national cultural policies may shape public preferences, administrative systems, programs, funding, and actions in the field of art education. The challenges of globalization require scholars and practitioners to develop international competencies, but research in the specific field of comparative art education policy has been very limited at present. How can art education scholars conceptualize and approach international cultural policy research as it relates to art education?

In this article I provide a pragmatic framework for studying art education policy as a subfield of comparative cultural policy. I describe the increasing importance of comparative research and introduce key analytical approaches to general comparative cultural policy research that have developed over the past 35 years. Based on a review of primarily North American and European scholarly literature and other documents, I trace the development of the field of comparative cultural policy along three main thrusts: comparative international, cross-national, and transnational. In doing so I construct a synthesis of major conceptual models utilized in comparative cultural policy analysis. This approach draws on constructivist and neo-institutionalist theory as well as theories of public policy process and policy analysis. My aim is to offer general recommendations for art education policy scholars interested in pursuing comparative research.

The Increasing Importance of Comparative Research in Cultural Policy

Art education policy research has been inseparable from the broader field of cultural policy research. The cultural policy framework of a nation, a region, or a community has provided an important context for examining...
specific policies and actions pertinent to art education. While learning from policy approaches and strategies of other geo-political entities has a long history, the present ease of international travel and communications, as well as the density of transnational networks and organizations, have contributed to an environment of extensive policy diffusion. Moreover, scholarship in comparative cultural policy has led to the possibilities of increased occurrence of policy transfer. Policy transfer has been concerned with a “process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting” (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2000, p. 5). In other words, international cultural interactions have promoted or required congruent policy structures and styles, and increased global information sharing has promoted the common evolution of arts policy. As we share arts education policies and practices with colleagues across geo-political borders—and they share their approaches with us—we have all exchanged strategies that will have to be adapted to very different political priorities, sociocultural contexts, and educational approaches.

Despite the increasing importance and frequency of exchanging information about arts education policies and practices in international forums, the field of art education policy research in the United States has been almost exclusively focused on the domestic context. A scan of leading U.S.-based journals published in the field of art education (dated from the 1980s through 2007)—such as Studies in Art Education; Arts Education Policy Review; Art Education; the Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society; and the Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education (formerly titled the Journal of Multi-cultural and Cross-cultural Research in Art Education)—revealed few comparative or international studies. The published articles that exist tended to be descriptive in nature, focusing on teaching strategies or curricular implications and using distinct nation-states or regions as the main unit of analysis. A recent major reference publication, titled Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education, similarly offered little insight into the development of comparative policy research (Eisner & Day, 2004). The two chapters in this publication that frame the section on “Policy Perspectives Impacting the Teaching of Art” made no mention of the role or significance of comparative and international policy study (Smith, 2004; Hope, 2004). A thorough review of literature pertaining specifically to comparative art education policy has not existed.1

What is Comparative Cultural Policy?

If researchers wish to compare diverse international approaches to art education, what might be a useful analytical framework to understand differing cultural policy contexts? This matter has begun with significant disagreement among scholars on what cultural policy research is and should be. As with the definition of culture, which has tended to be interpreted along either an anthropological or an aesthetic dimension, the field of

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1 It is beyond the scope of this article to develop a map of extant scholarship in the field of comparative art education policy, although such an exercise would surely make a valuable contribution to the field. A thorough review of literature emerging from the United States and abroad would also need to explore scholarship in close cognate fields such as comparative politics, international organization, and comparative education.
cultural policy research has been similarly divided in the approaches taken by scholars (Bennett, 2004; Scullion & García, 2005). A broad, anthropological, critical approach to cultural policy research has been taken by some scholars; this approach has involved a focus on cultural theory and cultural studies (Jameson & Miyoshi, 2001; Lewis & Miller, 2003; Miller & Yúdice, 2002; Smiers, 2003; Yúdice, 2003). In contrast, an applied approach to research based on public policy and political science research methods, “…through which cultural policy research is largely seen as the investigation of instrumental questions through empirical social science” (Bennett, 2004, p. 242), has been evident among many other scholars (Cherbo & Wyszomirski, 2000; Cummings & Katz, 1987; Mulcahy & Swaim, 1982; Schuster, 2002; Zemens & Kleingartner, 1999). The full spectrum between the critical theory, content and meaning of cultural policy approach and the cultural policy institutions, processes and systems approach has contributed greatly to the academic field. Further, these two approaches have not been mutually exclusive in the extant literature, and many book publications and journals contained contributions from both as well as hybrid perspectives (Balfe, 1993; Bradford, Gary, & Wallach, 2000; Crane, Kawashima, & Kawasaki, 2002; Smith & Berman, 1992).

For purposes of this article, I have employed the current United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2005) concept of cultural policy from the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, which stated:

“Cultural policies and measures” refers to those policies and measures relating to culture, whether at the local, national, regional or international level that are either focused on culture as such or are designed to have a direct effect on cultural expressions of individuals, groups or societies, including on the creation, production, dissemination, distribution of and access to cultural activities, goods, and services. (p. 5)

While not explicitly stated in this definition, I contend that art education policy must be a crucial subcategory of any cultural policy under examination. The UNESCO definition also clearly referred to multiple levels of cultural policy activity, suggesting the increasing importance of comparative and international research in this field. Indeed, as early as 1995, Kawashima wrote that “policy issues related to the arts and culture which formerly were addressed within national boundaries are expected to take on an added, cross-national dimension” (p. 289). The growing awareness of and interest in cultural globalization, the impact of policy transfer, and the increased influence of international organizations and policies that address cultural issues are discussed later in this article.

It is important for cultural policy scholars to recognize the differing approaches and levels of research evident in the field, each of which makes a significant contribution and is deserving of further study. In this article, I present a pragmatic approach to comparative research in cultural policy.
This approach leans on the arguably Anglo-American focus on the behavior of stakeholders and institutions in the policy process. It presents a tool for defining the rules of the game and understanding the actions of the players (North, 1990) in policy agenda-setting, formulation, decision-making, and implementation. The framework involves assessing formal and informal choice frameworks for public preferences, policy goals, policy issue areas, and policy tools.

This article presents a constructivist and neo-institutionalist lens for comparative cultural policy (Finnemore, 1996; March & Olsen, 1989; North, 1990; Peters, 2005; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Weaver & Rockman, 1993). From a constructivist perspective, I consider states to be ever-evolving socially constructed entities. Moreover, I believe that, within the context of globalization, it is crucial to consider the role of international organizations in influencing societal norms, values, and preferences (Finnemore, 1996, pp. 3-6). From a neo-institutionalist perspective, I consider institutions to be “persistent and connected sets of rules (formal or informal) that prescribe behavioral rules, constrain activity, and shape expectations” (Keohane, 1989, p. 163). Institutions are “the products of human design, the outcomes of purposive actions by instrumentally oriented individuals” (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991, p. 8). As Howlett and Ramesh (1995) explained, [Institutions] … affect actions by shaping the interpretation of problems and possible solutions and by constraining the choice of solutions and the way and extent to which they can be implemented. While individuals, groups, classes, and states have their specific interests, they pursue them in the context of existing formal organizations and rules and norms that shape expectations and affect the possibilities of their realization. (p. 27)

In sum, the points I make in this article are written using a constructivist and neo-institutionalist lens in developing a cultural policy institutions, processes, and systems approach to comparative cultural policy research. In the context of globalization, cultural policies must contend with the transformation of the content and systems through which cultural activities, goods, and services are produced, reproduced, distributed, and preserved. In the arts and culture sector, transnational contact can reveal differences and can propel harmonization as government leaders continually search for models and “best practices” to adapt and adopt (Dewey & Wyszomirski, 2007, pp. 274-275). As Heidenheimer, Heclo, and Adams (1990, chap. 1) suggested, systematic comparison of public policies can assist in acquiring guidance in designing better policies, in gaining a deeper understanding of how government institutions and political processes operate as they deal with concrete problems, and in dealing with increasing global interdependence. Over the past 35 years, three important stimuli have influenced the growth of research in comparative public policy: “(1) an increasing recognition of common problems across countries, (2) the emergence of transnational issues, and (3) the growth of international organizations” (Ariane Berthoin Antal, as cited in Schuster, 1996, p. 37). However, still in its infancy, the field of
comparative cultural policy comprises fragmented and piecemeal empirical literature on cross-national analyses of cultural policy (in most cases, arts funding policy), using the nation-state as the unit of analysis. This article traces the development of the field of comparative cultural policy along its comparative international, cross-national, and transnational trajectories.

Prior to discussing these three trajectories of research in comparative cultural policy research, it is helpful to identify several key terms as they are used throughout this article. The arts and culture sector is defined as “… a large, heterogeneous set of individuals and organizations engaged in the creation, production, presentation, distribution, and preservation of and education about aesthetic, heritage and entertainment activities, products, and artifacts” that can be found in the commercial realm, nonprofit sector, or the public sector (Wyszomirski, 2002, p. 187). As a core element of the cultural sphere of society, the significance of the arts and cultural sector should not be underestimated. Cultural policy is an arena of public policy that pertains to political choice processes and governmental institutions involved in problem identification, agenda formation, and policy formulation, adoption, implementation, and evaluation actions made in the arts and culture sector. New cultural governance systems are evolving around the world, and these systems must all contend with local, national, regional, and international issues that simultaneously intersect and interlink in multiple spheres of activity. Systems thinking is developing in the arts and culture sector because of a growing awareness of the manifold linkages among the broadening range of arts (which includes the high, popular, applied, heritage, and amateur arts) and deepening levels of governmental departments and agencies engaged in the sector (Cherbo & Wyszomirski, 2000, pp. 11-15).

The field of comparative cultural policy has traditionally focused on comparing individual nation-states’ cultural policies. As a result, comparative cultural policy models—that is, visual schematics accompanied by in-depth analytical descriptions of governance institutions and processes affecting the arts and culture sector—have utilized the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Factors such as the influence and outcomes of globalization, international policy issues and objectives, and transnational goals have not been addressed by any of the existing models. Thus, a significant gap has existed in current research in this field: Models of cultural policy that take supranational factors into account have not been created.

Trajectories of Comparative Cultural Policy Research

Over the past four decades, the field of comparative and international research in cultural policy has evolved along three main trajectories, which I call comparative international, cross-national, and transnational. These trajectories have been closely related, have informed each other, and as I shall argue, have converged to a great extent. As with all emerging areas of scholarship, terminology used in comparative research may lead to confusion. As Schuster (1996) put it: “Most commonly the phrase ‘comparative research’ is used to refer to research that is cross-national in its focus. Indeed, the phrases
‘comparative research,’ ‘international comparative research,’ and ‘cross-national research’ are often used as synonyms for one another” (pp. 22-23). However, a thorough review of extant scholarship revealed that significant conceptual distinctions can be identified among the three trajectories.

**Comparative International Cultural Policy Research**

The main driver of initial studies in comparative cultural policy was UNESCO in the early 1970s. A UNESCO series of publications in the 1970s and 1980s, called *Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies,* described the cultural policies of several individual countries. It was impossible to make valid comparisons across the early country-by-country reports created in the 1970s and early 1980s as each report defined and presented cultural policy in a manner framed by highly diverse social and political contexts. However, such studies were a logical first step in comparative research and were crucial in developing frameworks, criteria, definitions, and measures for future generations of comparative researchers.

The academic community began to develop more systematic comparative research approaches in the mid-1980s, most notably with the publication of a seminal work in the field titled *The Patron State: Government and the Arts in Europe, North America and Japan* (Cummings & Katz, 1987). However, it has been possible to critique these early studies for not actually employing comparative methodology. Early “comparative” research tended to present national cultural policies as single, in-depth case studies. “Readers may gain a comparative perspective through the knowledge of what is being done abroad, but the authors neither bear comparative viewpoints in mind nor extend the coverage to other countries in writing each chapter” (Kawashima, 1995, p. 292). Or, as Schuster (1996) explained in describing the use of “floating boundaries” in comparative research, studies in the 1970s and 1980s allowed the framework for describing national cultural policies to shift so that each country could define and present its own forms of public policy and intervention.

The use of floating boundaries in cultural policy research has led to a literature that might be termed, ‘ten countries, ten chapters, and a staple’. Two relatively well-known examples of this literature are *The Patron State,* edited by Milton Cummings and Richard Katz, and *Funding the Arts in Europe,* edited by John Myerscough. (Cummings & Katz 1987; Myerscough 1984). Despite heroic efforts by their respective editors to generalize from and distil insights across the country by country chapters, the information that these documents contain is severely restrained by a lack of a conceptual structure that would have promoted comparability across the various cases. (Schuster, 1996, pp. 30-31)

As Schuster pointed out, leading comparative cultural policy scholars of the 1980s began to identify elements of a usable conceptual framework for comparative analysis. The scholarly quest for articulating and designing policy models had begun, with an initial focus on identification of the nature
Studies in Art Education

A Comparative Approach to Art Education Policy Research

and the amount of federal public funding invested in the arts. It was quickly noted that many diverse tools to support the arts are employed in different nation-states. Governments have used five basic means to implement policy. These generic mechanisms may be termed owning and operating, incentives and disincentives, regulations and standards, legal rights and responsibilities, and information. Each of these basic mechanisms has had its own set of policy tools that might be implemented, either alone or in any combination with other tools (Schuster, 1994, pp. 44-45).

Indeed, broad questions of how the government decides what to support and how it allocates its funds among the projects supported have been based on the problem of defining art and culture at a national level in the first place. Key issue areas in arts policymaking have stemmed from the “systemic difficulty of devising cultural policies that can simultaneously secure a democratic and politic consensus, encourage innovation and creativity, and also accommodate pluralism and individuality” (Wyszomirski, as cited in Zemans & Kleingartner, 1999, p. 53). Controversy surrounding the quality versus equality issue often has arisen when determining government allocation of funds, and choices must be made in each art form between preservation of cultural heritage and the stimulation of new creative works. The choice between support of professional artistic activity and the support of amateur participation in the arts has been also highly controversial. Issues of national identity also arise, as many governments have been concerned with fostering and maintaining a distinctive national cultural identity. Moreover, fears of cultural imperialism (often “Americanization” or global popular culture) have made cultural defense an important policy goal. As is evident, policy choices in the arts and cultural sector have been diverse and complex.

Useful analytical models for comparing cultural policy choices and strategies at the nation-state level began to appear in the scholarship by the late 1980s. In 1989, Cummings and Katz identified numerous alternative strategies of government support, noting that there is an increasing tendency to mix these alternatives rather than implement a single strategy. Four main administrative models, ranging from a Ministry of Culture to an Impresario model, were distinguished from their comparative research. The researchers also found that the sources and forms of funding could provide an excellent approach to explaining a nation’s cultural policy. Sources of funding have been identified as either independent or dependent, and forms of funding have been described as either indirect or direct. Three basic varieties of independent funding have existed: the dedicated tax, the lottery, and the special endowment. The two sources of dependent funding have been generalized as either appropriations or indirect tax expenditures.

Turning to the sources and forms of indirect support for the arts, it has been important to consider both funds earmarked directly for the arts as well as programs that are generally available in society but which have been of special help to the arts. For example, one of the leading sources of indirect financial support has been the variety of social security and unemployment compensation programs that exist. Tax abatements for arts organizations and
Studies in Art Education

Patricia Dewey

tax deductions for charitable contributions have revealed the wide range of tax incentives that can be implemented in support of the arts. Legitimization of the state has also been a particularly powerful form of indirect support. Through the provision of public money, the granting of tax-exempt status, and through public honors to artists, the nation-state has sent a public message that the arts as a whole are important. Finally, the provision of free or subsidized services (e.g., maintenance) must not be overlooked as a form of support for the arts (Cummings & Katz, 1989).

Research published in the late 1980s was pivotal in developing contemporary analytical models to compare policy goals and objectives, bureaucratic frameworks, models of administration, mechanisms of policy implementation and policy tools across nation-states in a meaningful way. A conceptual framework for comparative analysis as supported by leading scholarship of the decade has been depicted in Figure 1. It was now possible to conduct descriptive structural and procedural cultural policy comparisons, and scholarly attention turned to articulation of more explanatory cultural policy models.

Cross-National Cultural Policy Research

Comparative cultural policy research began by identifying and exploring national policies, institutions, funding, and programs; essentially approaching each nation-state as a single case study. Over time, researchers were able to begin framing comparative analysis by using the factors of comparison presented in Figure 1. In the late 1980s and 1990s, significant strides were made in formulating modes of comparison that provided more explanatory strength as to why individual nation-states’ cultural policies existed in their current form. By articulating diverse forms of historical influences, social contexts, institutional constraints, and policy objectives, scholars developed stronger analytical models for comparing the goals, organization, and tools of cultural policy.

Current models of cross-national cultural policy analysis explicitly or implicitly have emphasized two major influences: history matters and institutions matter. The main determinants of the national environment in which policymaking occurs has begun with history. History, as it relates to cultural policy, has been a collective term for a cluster of political culture elements that include historical experience, governance systems, economic factors, attitudes toward art, and patronage patterns. In the first chapter of The Patron State, Cummings and Katz (1987) suggested that four broad historical settings have formed the basis for the evolutionary patterns of arts policies. In former royal absolutist states, such as France and Austria, there has been a long and rich tradition of government patronage of the arts. In the plutocratic, mercantilist states, such as England and the Netherlands, a more limited monarchy resulted in a much less lavish government patronage of the arts. These two polar types differed in their form of government, their economic and social development, and in religion. “Mixed” states, such as the German and Italian proto-states resulted in a blend of patronage...
Key Issues in the Decision-making Process

Policy goals and objectives

Framework for scope and role of government

Bureaucracy
structure / administration
funding procedures / process

Framework for selection of beneficiaries

Models of Administration

Ministry of Culture

Division of responsibility for culture among several ministries

Quasi-independent arts council or National endowment

Government as impresario

Selection of Means and Sources of Policy Implementation

Means
- Owning and operating
- Incentives and disincentives
- Regulations and standards
- Legal rights and responsibilities
- Information

Sources of Funding
- Dependent
  - Annual appropriations
  - Tax expenditures
- Independent
  - Dedicated tax
  - Lottery
  - Special endowment

Selection of Policy Tools

Indirect Financial Support
- Earmarked funds
- General programs
- Social security
- Tax abatements
- Provision of services
- Legitimization by the state

Direct Financial Support
- Direct appropriation
- Grants for special projects
- Matching grants
- Guarantee against loss

Figure 1. A Framework for Comparative Analysis of Cultural Policy Goals, Models of Administration, and Policy Tools.
patterns. The fourth group of nations, “new nations” such as Canada and the United States, faced a situation where for a long time public opinion was generally opposed to government support for the arts (Cummings & Katz, 1987; 1989).

As is apparent in Figure 1, the administrative structure of the nation-state government has been influential in selecting the means, funding sources, and tools of cultural policy programs. Influenced by standard operating procedures, a tradition of direct involvement or insulation, and the “importance” of the arts to the government, four broad patterns of government assistance for the arts has been identified. The government as patron has bought and paid for the services or creations of artists. As market manipulator, the government has tried to make the market congenial for the arts (for example, through tax abatements and matching grants). As regulator, the government has made specific decisions for the arts (for example, historic preservation policies). As impresario, the government itself has organized arts programs and presented them (Cummings & Katz, 1989, pp. 7-8). These patterns of government patronage have been further defined and categorized by the specific policy objectives a nation is pursuing. In 1989, Chartrand and McCaughey developed four alternative modes for the state: facilitator, patron, architect, and engineer. Despite the outdated formulation of this model, and although these four roles are mutually exclusive in theory, this model has remained useful in comparing the purposes of cultural policy articulated at the nation-state level.

One more valuable system for conducting comparative analyses of cultural patronage systems was provided by Mulcahy (2000), who suggested that

The variablity in cultural patronage is rooted largely in different sociohistorical traditions, of which it is possible to delineate four ideal types: 1) a nationalist public culture that began in the latter part of the seventeenth century as part of the centralizing policies of dynastic states like the Bourbons in France; 2) a socio-democratic public culture that emerged in the twentieth century in the trade union movements and socialist governments of the Nordic countries and the Netherlands; 3) a liberal political culture that created public and quasipublic cultural institutions as part of social and educational reforms in nineteenth- and twentieth-century capitalist societies; and 4) a libertarian political culture that is skeptical of sociocultural policies in general, but particularly those at the national level, preferring nonprofit cultural institutions and market allocations of cultural goods. (pp. 139-140)

The varying approaches exemplified by Cummings and Katz (1987; 1989), Chartrand and McCaughey (1989), and Mulcahy (2000) have provided some excellent tools for approaching the comparative analysis of cultural policy, using the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Where Cummings and Katz (1987; 1989) focused on comparative models of administration and varying means of implementing policy, Chartrand and McCaughey (1989) offered a model for comparing the various purposes of governmental arts
patronage. With an emphasis on historical and institutional considerations, Mulcahy (2000) presented a model for comparing why governments have come to make the arts policy decisions that lead to diverse modes of administration, funding, and types of cultural policy.

Although my focus has been on the development of models for comparative analysis in cultural policy research, many other approaches to comparative cultural policy were published by the mid-1990s. Kawashima (1995, pp. 294-295) presented an intriguing critical synthesis and system of classification for the existing literature at the time. He identified descriptive, interpretive, and theory-building scholarly dimensions of research, and a focus of the works in two main spheres. First, Kawashima noted, there have been "descriptions of cultural policies of different governments, largely in the form of compiled examples of individual situations." And second, there have been comparisons of "policy sectors, problems/issue areas, groups of policy objectives, comparison of systems, and writings on ideas and concepts" (p. 294).

In addition to the development of academic research in the field, the 1990s brought major contributions in research through initiatives spearheaded by international organizations as well as research centers. The evolution of systematic and regularly updated country-by-country cultural policy reports has led to a significant body of information that, to the present day, remains essential to academic and practitioner engagement in cultural policy.

Over the past three decades, several important research initiatives and publications in development-focused comparative cultural policy were led by UNESCO (for example, see http://www.culturelink.org/culpol/intro.html for a discussion of the evolution of the Guide to the Current State and Trends in Cultural Policy and Life in the UNESCO Member States project). Interesting comparative studies were conducted by scholars in networks (for example, the CIRCLE network of the Boekman Foundation in Amsterdam), in think-tanks and observatories (such as the Budapest Observatory, the Canadian Cultural Observatory, and the former U.S.-based Center for Arts and Culture), and in comparative cultural policy research centers (most significantly, the Bonn-based ERICarts).

An ongoing collaborative research initiative between the Council of Europe and ERICarts (the European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research) has been particularly deserving of discussion. The Council of Europe (which, it should be noted, is an entity separate from the European Union institutions) developed a process to review and evaluate public cultural policies of the countries adhering to the European Cultural Convention. A major achievement of this initiative was to develop a comprehensive system for describing and comparatively assessing the cultural policies of those nations reviewed (D’Angelo & Vespérini, 1998; 1999; Schuster, 2002, pp. 213-234). The concept of cultural policy reached by the leaders of the Council of Europe project (see Figure 2) has provided insight into a valuable approach that scholars may utilize in articulating highly diverse cultural policies. To continue the national reviews initiative in a web-based publication format, the Council of Europe joined forces with ERICarts in 1998 to produce the
annually-updated Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe. The Compendium has provided current cultural policy information that can be compared across time and across many nation-states.\(^4\) Detailed information and full country reports have been available online (see http://www.cultural-policies.net), and researchers interested in art education policies have easily referenced an overview of this field in any of the provided reports under item 8.3, titled ‘arts and cultural education.’ These cultural policy reviews and reports prepared from the 1990s to the present day have offered insightful policy descriptions and substantiating data using the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Only recently has comparative research begun to suggest a new, transnational, trajectory.

**Transnational Cultural Policy Research**

Where the 1990s solidified the definitions for describing national cultural policies and produced preliminary models for comparatively analyzing policy goals, organization, and tools, the start of the 21st century has brought increased scholarly attention to the global interlinkages of contemporary cultural life. International cultural policy issue areas such as intellectual property, cultural development, cultural diplomacy, global cultural heritage, and global popular culture have required policy formulation and decision-making at an intergovernmental or supranational level. However, the influence of international networks, epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions, and institutions has not been taken into account in comparative cultural policy research.

That said, recent publications have made contributions to framing a nascent trajectory of transnational cultural policy research. Smiers (2003) offered an impassioned call for international policy support of cultural diversity; Miller and Yúdice (2002, chap. 5) and Schuster (2002) provided excellent information on the international cultural policy infrastructure; Crane (2002) offered a concise overview of theoretical models of cultural globalization; and Wyszomirski (2000) and Dewey and Wyszomirski (2007) presented analytical frameworks for approaching international cultural policy. Two recent documents produced by international organizations drew attention to policies being formulated and implemented at the intergovernmental or supranational level. The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (October 20, 2005) and the European Union Commission’s Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World (May 10, 2007) pointed to a more proactive international leadership role being played in policy-making.

However, comparative analysis of cultural policy has taken place mainly by using the nation-state as the unit of analysis. In current comparative models, the main causal influences have been either explicitly or implicitly discussed as **history** and **institutions**.

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\(^4\)Unfortunately, a report on cultural policy in the United States is not currently included in the Compendium initiative.
Cultural policy is reviewed in terms of five criteria:

1. Explicit objectives of central government, in conjunction with regional and local government and the players in the cultural sphere;
2. Implicit objectives, which are reflected in various examples of action on the part of the state which, in retrospect, is organized and forms a coherent whole, since it is related to the real choices made by the players involved;
3. Action regarding the provision of culture—whether in terms of facilities, programming or artistic creation;
4. Resources allocated—not only financial but also administrative, structural, human and creative; and
5. Planning, that is preparing for government involvement in cultural activities, and planning the resources to be allocated.

Figure 2. Council of Europe Concept of Cultural Policy

It is now crucial to add the influence of globalization—or, more specifically, policy transfer—as a major influence in cultural policy developments. Scholars should consider how analytical frameworks created in the 1980s and 1990s might change when considering that nation-states are “embedded in an international social fabric that extends from the local to the transnational” (Finnemore, 1996, p. 145). As Keohane and Nye (2000) suggested:

The world system of the twenty-first century is not merely a system of unitary states interacting with one another through diplomacy, public international law, and international organizations. In that model, states as agents interact, constituting an international system. But this model’s focus on the reified unitary state fails sufficiently to emphasize two other essential elements of the contemporary world system: networks among agents, and norms—standards of expected behavior—that are widely accepted among agents. (p. 19)

In the field of cultural policy, international networks and norms are influencing public preferences and policy options at the nation-state level. I hypothesize that processes of policy transfer, whether voluntary or coercive, will significantly affect current cultural policy institutions and processes in all nations of the world. How and to what effect policy transfer influences choices of policy goals, organizations, and tools requires extensive further study. This research may lead to meaningful new comparative models that reflect more accurately the realities of the current and future world system.
Conclusion: Relevance to Comparative Art Education Policy Research

Understanding how to approach the broader comparative cultural policy context has been essential to understanding specific international policy matters that pertain to art education. In this article I have presented a literature review of existing North American and European scholarly publications and other documents in comparative cultural policy. In doing so, I have framed an approach to comparative cultural policy research that focuses on institutions, processes, and systems. The aim has been to offer background information and a strategy for those interested in studying art education policy in other nations to engage in this subfield of research within the larger field of comparative cultural policy. I have discussed how comparative cultural policy research has evolved from an exclusive focus on comparing individual nation-states, to establishing a valid framework for comparison across countries, to addressing transnational policy issue areas. These three trajectories have continued to inform each other, and often converge in both theory and practice. A central thesis of this article has been that the realities of the changing world system have not been taken into account in conceptualizing how processes of policy transfer might affect a full range of cultural policy decisions made at the nation-state level.

Art education policy researchers interested in international issues and comparative study should engage simultaneously in all three trajectories of research to ensure a holistic understanding of the area under investigation. Individual country reports could offer valuable insight into domestic and local art education practices that might not be available in more standardized international reporting structures. Systematic comparison of similar cross-national evaluation criteria, such as may be identified in the Compendium annual reports, would provide patterns emerging from increasingly generalizable comparative data. The third trajectory of research—the focus on policy transfer processes emerging at the transnational level—would offer key insight into influential priorities emerging from international organizations, networks, advocacy groups, professional associations, and epistemic communities. Using the framework discussed in this article, researchers in comparative art education policy could both apply the valuable approaches that already exist and contribute in turn to the evolution of analytical models for international research in the broader field of cultural policy.

References


